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Letter dated 12 February 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to draw your attention to the fact that, for several months, the Rwandan Government has been recruiting by force and providing military training and equipment to Burundian refugees, including children below the age of 18 in refugee camps in Rwanda, with the aim of destabilizing Burundi and its democratically elected institutions.

Recruiting vulnerable refugees by force and providing them with military training and equipment is a flagrant violation of the 28 July 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which, as you know, is the key document for the protection of refugees.

The forced recruitment of Burundian refugees for military purposes by the Rwandan Government with the aim of destabilizing their country of origin is also a clear violation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, signed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 24 February 2013, which the United Nations Secretary-General also signed as a witness. Article 5 of the Framework stipulates, inter alia, that the countries of the region made a commitment:

- Not to interfere in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries;
- To neither tolerate nor provide assistance or support of any kind to armed groups;
- To respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighbouring countries;
- To respect the legitimate concerns and interests of the neighbouring countries, in particular regarding security matters;
- To neither harbour nor provide protection of any kind to persons accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity or crimes of aggression, or persons falling under the United Nations sanctions regime;
- To facilitate the administration of justice through judicial cooperation within the region.

The forced recruitment of Burundian refugees below the age of 18 for military purposes by the Rwandan Government with the aim of destabilizing their country of origin also violates the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is one of

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the international legal instruments for the promotion and protection of human rights and which is intended to protect the rights of all children worldwide.

Burundi welcomes the fact that the Security Council today has at its disposal credible and varied reports, including the reports of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the non-governmental organization Refugees International, concerning the bellicose conduct of the Rwandan Government, which could destabilize not only Burundi but also the entire Great Lakes region.

In the light of this situation, which threatens international peace and security, an area that falls under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Security Council, the Council has the responsibility to take up the matter without delay and to take appropriate action to ensure that the Rwandan Government does not engage in any act designed to destabilize Burundi and to violate the above-mentioned regional and international instruments which it has signed.

It should be recalled that the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region also made reference to the commitment of the international community, including the Security Council, which "would remain seized of the importance of supporting the long-term stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region", and to the "appointment of a United Nations special envoy to support efforts to reach durable solutions in a multi-track plan that allows the convergence of all initiatives in progress".

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Albert **Shingiro**
Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations